

# New series — MEET A BEE GEE

No. 1

## BARRY GIBB

**L**ITTLE Barry Gibb had butterflies dancing about in his stomach the day he stepped out on to the stage of Manchester Gaumont, pulling his six-year-old twin brothers behind him and clutching tight to the guitar his dad had bought him for Christmas.

The audience smiled and muttered appreciatively; the lights went down; the butterflies danced some more; and then Little B.G. and the twins plunged headlong into their interpretation of Paul Anka's "I Love You Baby" and Tommy Steel's "Wedding Bells."

When they finished, the audience clapped and roared and the manager told them they were great and gave them a prize of a shilling each.

"It wasn't the money that spurred us on, then," says Barry today, "and it isn't now. We just wanted to be a success."

Over the years, Little B.G. has become a big (6ft. tall, 11st.) Bee Gee with a deep conscience, a sense of humour, and a look in his eyes that asks to be respected as a man of intelligence.

His conscience strikes him most when he appears with the group and sees bouncers pick up girl fans and fling them around without regard for their feelings or femininity. He feels personally responsible. He says it makes him feel sick inside.

For this reason, Barry revels in the story of Australian singer Normie Rowe, who once stopped in the middle of his act in order to tell a bouncer he'd seen whirling a girl around like a top before flinging her into the stalls.

Barry grinds his teeth and sits on the edge of his seat as he recounts the tale. "He got what was coming to him," he smiles with satisfaction. "Some of those heavies are so sadistic they frighten me to death."

As an act, three-fifths of the Bee Gees were born the day Barry first strummed his Christmas-present guitar and found tiny Maurice and Robin joining in with him.

### Amazed

"It was amazing," he says, in the warm, rounded Northern accent that 10 years in Australia couldn't take away. "I just started singing and trying to play, and suddenly I found the six-year-old twins with me doing three-part harmony."

"This," I thought, "could be something." So we kept at it, and I fiddled with the guitar till I found my own chords. I still play that way.

"After that we did the talent show at the Gaumont, then a few other things. About a year later, the fretboard warped!"

Barry still suffers from butterflies in the stomach before a show, except that now the butterflies have to flutter around in a fug of cigarette smoke.

"I get the whole bit when I'm waiting to go on," he told me. "I smoke and I tremble and I walk around all over the place. Any artist who tells you he doesn't get nerves is either lying or completely uninterested in his performance."

### Normal

Barry led a fairly normal life in Manchester around the age of 10 or 11. The family lived in a nice semi-detached in Keppel Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, and he went to Oswald Road School.

He later remembers his mother being a great friend of Herman's mother—"Pete's mum was married in my mum's wedding dress"—and of Herman being shy of girls and always telling them he had to go home to play his trumpet. That was in West Didsbury, where, maybe, dating girls and trumpet playing are as compatible as they could be.

When Barry's father and mother told him the family was emigrating to Australia, he remembers he didn't really worry about leaving his friends and the neighbourhood he knew.

"I just accepted it," says Barry. "It was like a big adventure, going half-way around the world."

"I was 12 when we got to Melbourne, I left school at 13, and after that I didn't have an education. I don't really know much at all. All I can do is write and read. Mathematics and history? Forget it."

"Show business has always been in my blood, but I did get an ordinary job once. It was in Brisbane, and I had to cart materials to a tailor's in a case. The tailor would give me the money and I would have to take it back to the office."

"I got sacked because I went home one day and forgot to hand the money in. I really did forget, but they thought I'd nicked it. So they sacked me."

Most Bee Gee fans know the big



By Alan Smith

break for the group was a children's hour series on Brisbane's BTQ7 TV station, but then the kiddies welfare department interfered in their activities and it eventually fizzled out.

Barry recalls how they afterwards did a year and a half at a place at Surfers' Paradise (he was about 14, the others 10 or 11) singing all kinds of material from "My Old Man's A Dustman" to "What'd I Say."

"Big artists would come to top the bill there," he says, "but we were so young and sweet we were killing their acts and doing great! We thought: if we can do this well—why not have a crack at Sydney?"

"We then went to Sydney and got a recording contract and made the first of 15 flop singles in a row."

Barry adds, bitterly: "People would tap us on the head and say: 'Go play with your toys.' They thought we were just kids who would never make it. There's no special love for the English, either. The Australians are very Americanised now."

"Eighteen months ago we got into the Australian Top 10 with 'Wine And Women'; then 'I Was A Lover, A Leader Of Men'; then 'Spicks And Specks'."

"Spicks And Specks" was No. 1 when we decided to leave Australia. But we went without one word of Press."

Father of Barry, Robin and Maurice is Mr. Hugh Gibb, who used to be a drummer with his own Hughie Gibb Orchestra on the Mecca circuit until he took his boys to Australia. He has managed them and (this they admit readily), pushed them along over the years.

Mr. Gibb was in the vast penthouse flat of Bee Gees' agent Robert Stigwood (where Barry and I sat talking), and he negotiated the animal skins over the floor to bring us the latest magazines from Australia.

Several minutes elapsed while Barry and his father muttered, understandably, at the way one particular magazine ignored the Bee Gees, or seemed to delight in playing them down. One Aussie columnist seemed to believe Normie Rowe and the Easybeats were the latest rave in Britain.

"See what I mean?" asked Barry. "We have hits in the States; we've been No. 1 here; and we get write-ups like that. What can you do?"

This natural exasperation hits him only once in a while. Usually, if he can, he likes to take life calmly.

He describes himself as very religious. "I don't like church," he told me, "but I am very religious. I just happen to think it's a very personal thing."

### A habit

"To go to church to learn—yes. But after that, I think too many people just go out of habit."

"It's the same," he volunteered, suddenly, "with sex in films. I hate to see it. I'm not saying I turn away, but I simply don't believe a woman should show off her body as an excuse for having no talent."

Barry is genuine about his fiercely moral point of view, but don't think of him as a humourless fuddy-duddy. He loves comedy—especially the "Carry On" films—and he hates realism or death.

"I adore Biblical epics," he admitted, as he sat forward, drumming his fingers on his knee. "They're fantastic."

He believes in life after death; that throughout life we are auditioning for something higher; that death is something he should not be afraid of; and that people who think there is nothing to follow have got "a heck of a check."

Barry is also convinced of the existence of unidentified flying objects, that in ten years the Negroes in this world will wage war on the whites;

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**I've got a car but still manage to save in the Army**

—says Maurice Perry, 20, of Birmingham, serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps. Maurice, who is training to be a medical clerk, joined the Army through Junior Entry.

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